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Faculty Profile

Carleton Donchess



Carleton Donchess, the Chair of the Accounting and Finance Department, is a man on a mission; in fact he is a man on a number of missions. When you enter his office, you immediately notice five brief cases lined up next to his desk. This is Carleton's organizational scheme to keep track of his many projects. At the top of his list of priorities is positioning his department to meet the growing demand for accounting and finance professionals in this region. The greater Boston area is now considered to be the third largest financial market in the world, and Professor Donchess wants to make every effort to ensure that Bridgewater students can build their careers in this region once they graduate. Since 1997 when he became Chair of the newly formed department, Professor Donchess has been busy positioning his department and his majors by developing new programs, including an accounting concentration in the new Master of Science in Management program and a minor in Accounting and Finance. Prior to becoming a department, the Accounting and Finance program was a concentration within the Department of Management Science since the early 1980s. Professor Donchess recognizes that his job as founding chair was greatly eased by the fact that the program had an already established reputation for academic rigor and quality.

Through the efforts of the Accounting and Finance faculty, students in the major have reaped great rewards and distinguished honors. Bridgewater Accounting students have won 38 out of a possible 51 awards presented by the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants in their state-wide essay contest. As a result of their growing reputation for excellence, Bridgewater students are actively recruited by national and regional accounting firms such as Ernst and Young, PriceWaterhouseCoopers and KPMG, as well as a number of financial firms including Wells Fargo and American Express. Such recruiting efforts are usually not found on other state college campuses.

Professor Donchess readily admits that the accounting profession has taken some hits over the scandals at Enron, WorldCom and most recently, several major mutual fund firms, which in large part were the result of severe ethical lapses and failures to follow standard accounting practices. In response to the perception of weakened ethical standards within the profession, the

Accounting and Finance Department under the coordination of Professor Kathleen Sevigny held a conference in October, focusing on ethics in accounting. The conference was organized in partnership with the Massachusetts Association of Accounting Professors (MAAP) and featured a panel including several Bridgewater State College grads, discussing the importance of establishing firm ethical guidelines for accounting professionals.

The biggest challenge facing the new department involved the new "150-hour" certification rule to sit for the CPA exam in Massachusetts. Students seeking to attain the CPA designation must now complete ten additional courses beyond the bachelor's degree prior to sitting for the exam.

Although at first this appeared to be a significant burden, Professor Donchess states that this requirement has actually heightened interest in the Master of Science in Management program. Professor Donchess expects growing enrollment in the master's concentration in accounting as students prepare to sit for the CPA exam. Interestingly, as many other institutions are facing sharp drops in enrollment, at Bridgewater there is no evidence of a downturn. There are currently 332 undergraduate majors and approximately 40 students choosing the accounting concentration in the Master of Science in Management program.

It is clear after talking with him that Professor Donchess is a dedicated teacher and champion of the profession of accounting. His primary commitment is to provide service to the students and prepare them for the professional challenges they will face once they leave Bridgewater. Professor Donchess is also a team player; he readily praises his faculty for the success the program has attained over the years and compliments the college administration for their support in helping advance the mission objectives of accounting and finance. All those brief cases lined up in his office are a testament to the hard work and commitment of Professor Carleton Donchess. In but a few years, the Accounting and Finance Department has become an academic jewel not only at the college but throughout the region.